

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-2022:

**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
13th JANUARY 2022**

**REPORT OF: DIRECTOR
PROSPERITY AND
DEVELOPMENT**

	Agenda Item No.
APPLICATION NO: 21/1179 - Demolition of The Dragon (formerly The Bridge Inn) and no. 1 Saron Street, and erection of 5 no. units of purpose built student accommodation (sui generis). Amended plans received 19/10/21, The Dragon Inn & 1 Saron Street, Treforest, Pontypridd	

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the above planning application.

2. RECOMMENDATION

To approve the application in accordance with the recommendations of the Service Director, Planning.

3. BACKGROUND

This application was originally reported to the Development Control Committee on 2nd December 2021 (A copy of the original report is attached as Appendix A). Following consideration of the application, Members resolved to refuse planning permission, contrary to the recommendation of the report. Members reached this conclusion as they considered that the development would result in an adverse impact upon both the character and appearance of the site and wider conservation area.

As set out in the original report to Committee, the planning history of the site reveals that in 2017 planning permission was approved for the conversion of the existing public house to form 4 no. flats, with a total of 13 bedrooms, providing student accommodation. However, more recently planning permission was approved, on appeal in January 2019 (18/0204/10), for the construction of a purpose-built student accommodation block, comprising 25no. bedrooms arranged over 5 flats. This permission remains live and may be implemented. The current scheme (submitted by the same applicant) seeks to revisit the design and appearance of the proposed building; however, it does not propose either an increase in the number of units or bedrooms proposed within the scheme. As such, it is considered that the principle of residential use as purpose-built student accommodation on the site has clearly been established as acceptable.

Given the above, it is considered that the key consideration in the assessment of the current application relates to the changes in design and scale proposed by the revised submission.

As with the consented scheme, the current application would result in the development of a prominent building occupying a corner position on the junction of Bridge Street and Saron Street. Similarly, the overall footprint of the proposed building would be comparable to that approved, occupying almost the entire plot. The key changes relate to the appearance of the building, particularly from Bridge Street and Saron Street. Whilst the current scheme retains the three storey block at the west of the site (adjacent to the railway embankment). The design, layout and appearance of the two storey block fronting Saron Street has been revised. The revised approach is that this structure would now take the form a three-storey block, albeit that the third storey would have the appearance of a roof space. This would be achieved by setting the upper storey of the north and west elevations of the building at an angle to the ground and first floor elevation, in order to give the appearance of a mansard style roof construction. The accommodation created within this 'roof space' would then be served by roof lights in the sloping faces of the north and west elevations. Whilst large dormers were initially proposed, these were subsequently removed with a view to reducing the potential visual mass of the upper floor.

It is acknowledged that the design changes have resulted in an increase in the size of the building, by way of its height fronting Saron Street. However, having assessed the scheme it is not considered that the increase is so significant as to cause visual harm. The height of the larger three storey block adjacent to the railway embankment remains unchanged. Under the 2018 scheme the two storey block extended to 5.8, the current application sees this increase by 2.2 metres. However, it is considered that the potential increase in mass and bulk of the proposed Saron Street block is partially off set by the design of the upper floor, which would appear as a 'mansard style roof'. Street scene montages which accompany the application also illustrate that whilst the height of the block would extend above the ridge line of dwellings on Saron Street, the increase is limited to approximately 1.6 metres. Furthermore, it is noted that a comparable arrangement exists at the opposing end of the street, whereby Saron Chapel extends above the height of the ridgeline established by the terrace.

Whilst the increase in height of the block fronting Saron Street is acknowledged, it is commented that the design of the current scheme represents some benefits over and above the scheme that was allowed at appeal. Most notably, it is commented that the change in height between the two elements of the building (east and west blocks) is less jarring, particularly on the prominent side elevation fronting Bridge Street. It is also noted that the introduction of the mansard style roof has more positive factors, in terms of design quality, than the approved flat roof design. As such, whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would result in the formation of a prominent building, close to a number of well used routes, it is considered that the revised scheme is acceptable in design terms and would not result in an adverse impact upon either the setting or appearance of the conservation area. As such, it is considered that the proposal would accord with policies AW5 and AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

As such, to conclude, the approval, on appeal, of an earlier scheme at the site has clearly established that the principle of a 25 bed purpose built student accommodation building is acceptable. Furthermore, the Inspector concluded that given the highly sustainable location of the site, the scheme was also considered acceptable in highway safety terms. As such, it is considered that the key issue in the assessment of this application relates to the changes proposed to the scale and appearance of the development. Whilst it is acknowledged that the amendments would result in an increase in the height of the part of the building which addresses Saron Street/ Bridge Street, it is considered that changes to the design, which are associated with this, would not be harmful to either the character or setting of the site and conservation area. Similarly, given the layout and topography of the site, it is not considered that the levels of amenity of neighbouring residents would be affected to a greater degree than the approved scheme.

As such, having regard to both the planning history of the site, the Inspectors earlier appeal decision and the comments of consultees, it is considered that the application accords with the requirements of planning policy.

Notwithstanding the above, if Members are still minded to refuse permission, the following reason is presented for consideration.

- 1. As a result of the scale and appearance of the proposed student accommodation block, it is considered that the development would appear out of keeping with both the character and appearance of the existing development in the vicinity of the site and the wider conservation area. As such the proposal is considered to be contrary to policies AW5, AW6 and AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and Planning Policy Wales.**

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

2 DECEMBER 2021

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 21/1179/10 (EL)
APPLICANT: Mr Smith
DEVELOPMENT: Demolition of The Dragon (formerly The Bridge Inn) and no. 1 Saron Street, and erection of 5 no. units of purpose built student accommodation (sui generis). Amended plans received 19/10/21.
LOCATION: THE DRAGON INN AND 1 SARON STREET, TREFOREST, PONTYPRIDD, CF37 1TF
DATE REGISTERED: 27/08/2021
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Treforest

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

REASONS: The principle of the redevelopment of the site as purpose-built student accommodation has been established as acceptable by the approval of an earlier planning appeal at the site. The proposed changes in terms of layout, scale and design are considered acceptable in terms of their impacts upon both the character and appearance of the conservation area and amenity of neighbouring residents. The scheme is also considered acceptable in highway safety terms. As such, the proposal accords with the requirements of relevant policies of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and National Policy.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

- The proposal is not covered by determination powers delegated to Service Director Planning.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of The Dragon Inn (formerly The Bridge Inn) and 1 Saron Street and erection of a purpose built student accommodation block, comprising 5 no. units of accommodation.

The site occupies a corner position on the junction of Saron Street and Bridge Street. The proposed building would occupy almost the entire plot, with a broadly rectangular footprint. The building would extend to a maximum of 23.0 metres in length and 12.5 metres in width.

The building is essentially formed by two blocks; a three-storey block would occupy the eastern extent of the site, siting adjacent to the boundary with the railway embankment. This would have a flat roof design and would extend to 8.6 metres in height. The western extent of the building forms the 'second block' this would take the form a three-storey block, albeit that the third storey would have the appearance of a roof space, with the accommodation created being served by roof lights in the sloping faces of the north and west elevations. When viewed from Saron Street, this block would extend to 8.0 metres in height, siting below that of the adjoining 'eastern block'.

The building would be divided into 5 separate units, each providing 5 no. bedrooms arranged over three floors, with the development providing a total of 25 bedrooms. Each of the 5 units would benefit from its own 'front door' access onto Saron Street. With each unit also having its own (partially concealed) bin store space to the front, street elevation. The front elevation of the building would be off-set slightly from the line of the highway fronting Saron Street, meaning that space would be available to create small rain gardens to the front of each of the units. Cycle storage would be provided within the hallways of each of the units.

The building itself is contemporary in its design, with the primary material proposed for the elevations of the eastern three storey block, adjacent to the railway line being a composite cladding, with panels adjacent to window openings being in a contrasting colour tone to add interest.

As noted above, the second western 'block' of the building, which would occupy a position on the junction of Bridge Street and Saron Street would also be a three storey construction, albeit at a lesser scale to the first. Whilst accommodation would be arranged over three floors, the upper storey of the north and west elevations of the building would be angled in order to give the appearance of a mansard style roof construction. Ground and first floor elevations would be finished in a painted render, with the upper floor (roof) having a tiled finish. The result being this part of the building would have an appearance comparable to a modern terrace of 5 no. dwellings. A uniform pattern of fenestration appears on the north and west elevations to serve the residential accommodation, with those openings on the Saron Street elevation having a strong vertical emphasis.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement which states that the applicant's vision is *"to provide a distinctive landmark structure which sits on this important corner junction and provides the sort of more dominant urban insertion which the large chapel at the other end of Saron Street provides."*

It is noted that applications for both conservation area consent and planning permission for the redevelopment of the site, by the construction of a 3 storey student accommodation block comprising 5 flats (25 bedrooms), were allowed at appeal in January 2019.

Site Appraisal

The application site is made up of the former Bridge Inn Public House and number 1 Saron Street. As such, the site forms a corner plot on the junction of Bridge Street

and Saron Street, which extends to approximately 335 square metres. The site lies in the Old Park Terrace Conservation Area of Treforest. This is a small conservation area separated from Castle Square Conservation Area by the railway line. This area contains notable examples of C19th architecture and townscape illustrating the local social history. The Bridge Inn is a two storey property, which although currently vacant is known to have been depicted as a public house since the First Edition Ordnance Survey map in 1875. The main building fronts Bridge Street, with an annexe to the rear. Directly adjoining the building is number 1 Saron Street, a two storey residential dwelling. A small gap in the terrace separates number 1 from the remainder of the terrace dwellings on Saron Street. Saron Street is a narrow residential street, characterised by relatively small two storey dwellings. At the southern end of the street, is Saron Chapel, a prominent historic building, which gives its name to the street. Saron Street is quiet no-through road to traffic and on-street parking restrictions are in place in the vicinity of the site. To the east the site is bounded by the railway line.

Planning History

18/0204	The Dragon Inn & 1 Saron Street, Treforest, Pontypridd CF37 1TF	Demolition of The Dragon Inn (Formerly The Bridge Inn) and No. 1 Saron Street, and erection of 3 storey student accommodation block (sui generis) comprising 5 flats. (Amended Plans Received 19th June 2018)	Allowed on appeal 11/01/19
18/0287	The Dragon Inn & 1 Saron Street, Treforest, Pontypridd CF37 1TF	Conservation area consent for demolition of The Dragon Inn (formerly The Bridge Inn) and 1 Saron Street and erection of 3 storey student accommodation block, comprising 6 flats.	Allowed on appeal 11/01/19
16/1181	The Bridge Inn, Bridge Street, Treforest	Conversion, extension and change of use from Public House (A3) to 4 no. student flats with amenity / service area to rear.	Granted with conditions 22/08/17

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised by direct neighbour notification, site notices and press notice. Letters of representation have been received from 6 residents in response to the application along with a letter of objection from Pontypridd Town Council. These are summarised as follows:

Parking and Highway Safety

- Concerns are expressed with regard to the parking problems which already exist in the vicinity of the site. It is commented that the proposed development would make this situation worse.

- Concerns are expressed that the construction period would also be extremely disruptive to residents both in terms of access to their homes and noise and disturbance. It is also noted that the streets which serve the site are narrow and not suitable for large vehicles. Saron Street is a cul-de-sac with no turning area.
- Questions are raised with regard to where plant, machinery and materials would be stored during construction.
- It is noted that there are only limited car parking spaces (on-street) on Saron Street for 20 houses. They state there is no more room to accommodate further vehicles.

Visual Impacts

- Concerns are expressed with regard to the appearance of the building.
- Residents state they believe the building would be out of keeping with the appearance and proportions of the area.
- It is commented that the site is in a conservation area and this too should be taken into account.
- The scheme does not take account of the topology of Saron Street and Bridge Street, which are both very old narrow streets.
- Concern is expressed that in placing the access to the building onto Saron Street, this will place further pressure on the street and its residents.

Amenity Impacts

- A resident (on Saron Street) express concern that the development may result in a loss of light to their property.
- Other residents state the development would result in a negative impact upon the amenity of existing residents.

Other

- It is questioned whether there is a 'need' for more student accommodation in the area, as many existing student rental properties are vacant.
- Concern is expressed that the development of further student accommodation would further erode the community of Treforest. It is suggested that a lack of family homes, means families are moving away from Treforest, therefore adversely affecting the sustainability of the community.
- Questions are raised with regard to how it could be ensured the development remains in use for students.
- Questions are raised with regard to whether students would be prevented from owning cars.
- Questions are raised with regard to whether a Travel Plan is required.
- Questions are raised with regard to the potential impact of the development upon the structural integrity of the nearby railway bridge.
- It is claimed that the development would result in a loss of value to existing properties.
- Reference is made to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It is asked that regard is given to the part of the legislation which refers to 'A Healthier Wales; a country in which "people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised"'. It is commented that it is the view of the Town Council that the

development, because of the potential mental distress that it may cause, runs counter to this duty.

CONSULTATION

Transportation Section – no objections raised subject to conditions.

Public Health and Protection – no objections raised, condition suggested requiring the submission of a scheme for protecting the future occupiers of the development from noise from the adjacent Cardiff - Merthyr Railway Line.

Countryside, Landscape & Ecology –no objections raised, the application is accompanied by an appropriate update to an earlier bat survey. Conditions and informative note suggested.

Land Reclamation and Engineering – no objections raised.

Dwr Cymru – no objections raised, conditions suggested.

Network Rail – no objections raised advised consultation with Transport for Wales

Transport for Wales – no response received to date.

Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust – no objections raised. As part of the assessment of an earlier application, a Level 3 building survey has been completed and submitted to the regional historic environment record. This provides appropriate preservation by record for the existing structures on site.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The site is within settlement boundaries and within the Old Park Terrace Conservation Area.

AW2 - advises that development proposals on non-allocated sites will only be supported in sustainable locations.

AW5 - sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

AW6 - requires development to involve a high quality design and to make a positive contribution to place making, including landscaping.

AW7 – states that development proposals which impact upon sites of architectural or historic merit will only be permitted where the proposal would preserve or enhance the appearance of the site.

AW8 - provides the criteria for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment

SSA12 - seeks 20% affordable housing in schemes of 5 units or more, however developments for student accommodation are exempt from these obligations.

SSA13 - provides the criteria for development within settlement limits.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Built Environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development of Flats – Conversions and New Build.

Supplementary Planning Guidance: Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

National Guidance

In the determination of planning applications regard should also be given to the requirements of national planning policy which are not duplicated in the Local Development Plan, particularly where national planning policy provides a more up to date and comprehensive policy on certain topics.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (PPW) was issued on 24th February 2021 in conjunction with Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (FW2040). PPW incorporates the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into town and country planning and sets out Welsh Government's (WG) policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of all planning applications. FW2040 sets out the National Development Framework for Wales (NDF), WGs current position on planning policy at regional and national level.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking set out in PPW; and is also consistent with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's sustainable development principles through its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives of driving sustainable development and building healthier communities and better environments.

It is also considered the proposed development is compliant with the NDF, with the following policies being relevant to the development proposed:

- Policy 1 – Where Wales will grow – Employment/Housing/Infrastructure
- Policy 2 – Shaping Urban Growth – Sustainability/Placemaking

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Furthermore, applications that are not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be allowed, unless material considerations justify the grant of planning permission.

Main Issues

The current application proposes the demolition of The Dragon Inn (formerly The Bridge Inn) and 1 Saron Street in order to enable the erection of a 3 storey student accommodation block, comprising 5 units, each with 5 no. bedrooms. As such, the key considerations in the determination of the application are whether the proposed use is compatible with the sites location, along with the potential impacts of the resulting development upon both the character of the site and its wider conservation area setting. The potential impacts of the development upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and highway safety are further considerations.

Principle of development and background

The application site is located within settlement limits, with the site occupying a central position on an established street close to a range of amenities and transport links. Planning policy AW1 sets out the requirements for new housing development and the methods by which the provision of new housing will be met. Furthermore, policy AW2 promotes development sustainable locations such as this. In addition to this, consideration must also be given to the planning history of the site. This reveals that in 2017 planning permission was approved for the conversion of the existing public house to form 4 no. flats, with a total of 13 bedrooms, providing student accommodation. However, more recently planning permission was approved, on appeal in January 2019 (18/0204/10), for the construction of a purpose-built student accommodation block, comprising 25no. bedrooms arranged over 5 flats.

The current application (submitted by the same applicant) seeks to revisit the design and appearance of the proposed building. The application does not propose either an increase in the number of units or bedrooms proposed within the scheme.

Nevertheless, it is noted that following the publicity of the planning application concern has been raised by residents regarding the introduction of student accommodation to, what is largely at present, still a conventional residential terrace (Saron Street). Further reference is made to the negative impacts, in terms of social cohesion, that have resulted upon the local community by the rising numbers and concentration of houses in multiple occupation in Treforest.

Whilst these concerns are understood, it is important to make clear the distinctions, in terms of the planning classification, between purpose built student accommodation and houses in multiple occupation. Each of the aforementioned uses fall within different uses classes; with purpose built student accommodation being classified as a 'sui generis – student accommodation' and a house in multiple occupation (HMO) being classified as either Class C4 or 'sui generis–HMO'. Therefore, whilst it is acknowledged that there may be some similarities between the two development types, a proposal for sui generis purpose built student accommodation cannot be assessed strictly against the same criteria that is set out with the Council's *Supplementary Planning Guidance: Houses in Multiple Occupation*, which is intended to control Class C4 houses in multiple occupation and 'sui generis-HMO'.

On a related point, it is noted that many of the letters of representation received comment that they believe there is no need for more student accommodation in the Treforest area. Whilst this point is taken, it must be noted that it is not the role of the planning system to assess market forces and how strong the demand is likely to be for the intended development. Furthermore, market demand does not form a material planning consideration, which would carry weight in the determination of the current planning application.

Overall, having regard to the above, most notably the recent planning history of the site, it is considered that the principle of residential use as purpose built student accommodation on the site is clearly established as acceptable. However, further consideration will need to be given to the impacts of the revised development, in visual terms, amenity terms and highway safety. These matters are assessed in the following sections of the report.

Character and Appearance

As detailed above the site already benefits from a live planning consent to demolish the Dragon Inn (former Bridge Inn) and adjoining residential property on Saron Street and construct new purpose built student accommodation.

The current application seeks to revisit the design and appearance of the proposed building, without increasing the number of units or bedrooms proposed within the scheme. The Design and Access Statement, which accompanies the submission, comments that the applicant wishes to reflect more traditional features within the design of the revised scheme. It is also commented that the revisions include environmental improvements by way of the introduction of a sedum roof and rain gardens (fronting Saron Street) which would contribute to a more sustainable drainage arrangement for the site.

As with the consented scheme, the current application would result in the development of a prominent building occupying a corner position on the junction of Bridge Street and Saron Street. Similarly, the overall footprint of the proposed building would be comparable to that approved, occupying almost the entire plot. The key changes relate to the appearance of the building, particularly from Bridge Street and Saron Street.

Whilst the current scheme retains the three storey block at the west of the site (adjacent to the railway embankment). The design, layout and appearance of the two storey block fronting Saron Street has been revised. The revised approach is that this structure would now take the form a three-storey block, albeit that the third storey would have the appearance of a roof space. This would be achieved by setting the upper storey of the north and west elevations of the building at an angle to the ground and first floor elevation, in order to give the appearance of a mansard style roof construction. The accommodation created within this 'roof space' would then be served by roof lights in the sloping faces of the north and west elevations. Whilst large dormers were initially proposed, these were subsequently removed with a view to reducing the potential visual mass of the upper floor.

The internal layout of the building has also been amended, in an attempt to better reflect the pattern of development in the area, which is characterised by traditional terraced rows. Whereas the approved scheme details a number of flats all served by one entrance, the current scheme effectively divides the building along a vertical access, effectively creating 5 no. units (each with 5 bedrooms) served by their own 'front door'. Combined with the changes in fenestration, the result is that from Saron Street, the revised design bears some of the characteristics of a modern terrace row. This is heightened further by the proposed materials which illustrate the use of coloured render at ground and first floor and the use of a tiled finish to the roof/third floor on the elevations fronting Saron Street/ Bridge Street.

It is acknowledged that the design changes have resulted in an increase in the size of the building, by way of its height fronting Saron Street. However, having assessed the scheme it is not considered that the increase is so significant as to cause visual harm. The height of the larger three storey block adjacent to the railway embankment remains unchanged. Under the 2018 scheme the two storey block extended to 5.8, the current application sees this increase by 2.2 metres. However, it is considered that the potential increase in mass and bulk of the proposed Saron Street block is partially off set by the design of the upper floor, which would appear as a 'mansard style roof'. Street scene montages which accompany the application also illustrate that whilst the height of the block would extend above the ridge line of dwellings on Saron Street, the increase is limited to approximately 1.6 metres. Furthermore, it is noted that a comparable arrangement exists at the opposing end of the street, whereby Saron Chapel extends above the height of the ridgeline established by the terrace.

Both policy AW7 and *Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Built Environment* set out a range of criteria which must be taken into account when assessing applications for development in conservation areas. The guidance states that proposals in and adjacent to conservation areas should avoid harming the character and appearance of those areas and should, where possible positively enhance them.

In assessing this aspect of the application, it is considered that the existing approval at the site represents a modern and contemporary building that would produce a new "landmark" style building within the street scene. It is also noted that at appeal, the Inspector took the view that the proposal would preserve and/or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, thereby providing a good indication that the introduction of a modern building would be acceptable at this location.

Whilst the increase in height of the block fronting Saron Street is acknowledged, it is considered that the design of the current scheme represents some benefits over and above the scheme that was allowed at appeal. Most notably, it is commented that the change in height between the two elements of the building (east and west blocks) is less jarring, particularly on the prominent side elevation fronting Bridge Street. It is also considered that the introduction of the mansard style roof has more positive factors, in terms of design quality, than the approved flat roof design. As such, whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would result in the formation of a prominent building, close to a number of well used routes, it is considered that the revised scheme is acceptable in design terms and would not result in an adverse impact upon either the

setting or appearance of the conservation area. As such, it is considered that the proposal would accord with policy AW5 and AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

Residential amenity

As noted above, the site is located within a predominantly residential area; in this respect consideration must be given to the potential impacts upon the privacy and amenity of existing neighbouring residents.

As noted in the preceding section of the report, the key change between the consented scheme and that currently proposed relates to an increase in the height of the block fronting Saron Street / Bridge Street. In order to assist in the assessment of this aspect, the application is accompanied by a series of 'shading analysis plans'. The plans provide an analysis of shading during Summer and Autumn/ Spring at intervals of 8am, 12pm and 4pm. Given the location of the application site to the east/ north of existing residential dwellings on Saron Street, the period of greatest possible impact would be during the first few hours of daylight. Having reviewed the analysis plans they demonstrate that, despite the increase in the height of the building, no additional impacts by way of overshadowing to the properties to west would result. It is also noted that the revised scheme illustrates a slight set back of the front elevation of the building, which would address Saron Street. Although only marginally, this would increase the separation distance between the development and properties opposite and also allow for the creation of small rain gardens to the elevation on Saron Street, thereby 'softening' the development in the street scene.

In the assessment of this aspect of the development, regard must also be had to the previous application and the fact that; during the appeal process, in their consideration of the potential loss of light and effect on living conditions of nearby properties, the Inspector concluded that the *'impact would be no greater than the current situation'*.

As such, overall, it is not considered that the proposal would result in an undue loss of privacy or amenity to neighbouring occupiers and therefore accords with policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

Highway Safety

With regard to the potential impact upon highway safety, following consultation with the Council's Transportation Section, it is noted that no objection have been raised to the proposal.

Access

In terms of access the proposed development is located at the junction between Bridge Street and Saron Street, Treforest. Bridge Street has a carriageway width of 6.0m, a 1.2m wide footway on its development side and a 1.2m wide footway opposite. The 6.0m wide carriageway incorporates a 2.0m wide parking bay on the development side of Bridge Street limited to 2 hours with no return within 4 hours between 8am – 6pm, additionally, there is an exception to the limited waiting restriction for resident permit

holders. Bridge Street is one-way and exits via Old Park Terrace onto New Park Terrace.

Saron Street has a carriageway width of 4.0m and a 1.2m wide footway on the opposite side to the development. There is no continuous footway on the development side of Saron Street. The 4.0m carriageway incorporates a 2.0m wide parking bay on the opposite side to the development. As with Bridge Street, the parking bay is limited to 2 hours with no return within 4 hours between 8am – 6pm with an exemption for permit holders. Saron Street is a cul-de- sac with no turning facility.Parking

In terms of parking, the proposed development would result in a bespoke student accommodation block comprising of 25 beds in total. In accordance with the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance: Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements (March 2011), bespoke student accommodation has a requirement of 1 space per 25 beds for servicing, wardens and drop-off areas and 1 space per 10 beds for students and visitors. This equates to a requirement of 4 spaces for the proposed development. It is noted that there are no parking spaces provided to serve the proposed development, resulting in the creation of on-street parking demand to the detriment of highway safety and the free flow of traffic. This gives major cause for concern, particularly when considering the sub-standard nature of the local highway network and its inability to provide sufficient levels of on-street parking.

Notwithstanding the above, in considering the appeal of the 2018 planning application (APP/L6940/A/18/3212533), the Inspector concluded that *“this is a highly sustainable location where a lack of parking can be accepted given the choice of alternative means of transport. It has also been accepted that students tend to have a lower rate of car ownership and indeed this is reflected in the parking standards. The existing use of the site as a public house and the existing planning permission for the conversion of the public house to student accommodation would both generate a higher parking requirement than the appeal proposal.”*

As such, the Inspector concluded that the scale of the parking shortfall, at 3 - 4 spaces would be low. Furthermore, they took the view that the failure to provide these spaces would be outweighed by a combination of the factors that were identified within the inspectorate's report and the acknowledged benefits of the redevelopment of the site.

Therefore, in light of the appeal decision and the fact that this permission may be implemented (until 2024), it is not considered that any concerns on the grounds of highway safety and the free flow of traffic would be sufficiently great as to warrant the refusal of current planning application.

Servicing, Deliveries and Construction

There is general concern with regard to the servicing of and deliveries to the proposed development, due to the sub-standard nature of the local highway network. However, this is an issue which already exists, particularly since the level of trips associated with the servicing of and deliveries to the existing lawful use of the site (as a public house) would be comparable to that of the proposed development. As such, this matter alone does not warrant sufficient highway safety grounds for objection to the application.

In addition to the above, the Council's Transportation Section express some concern in relation to the potential impact of the development during its construction phase, should planning permission be granted. The proposed building almost entirely fills the footprint of the site, as a consequence, no space would be available for a site office and welfare facilities, or the storage of materials and off-street parking for site operatives. The configuration of the local highway network itself would present difficulties with regard to deliveries to the site by Heavy Goods Vehicles. This point is highlighted by the presence informative signage on the approach to Saron Street advising that it is unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles. Nevertheless, they conclude by stating that on balance, these construction impacts could be limited by imposition of a suitably worded planning condition.

Therefore, to conclude, whilst the Council's Transportation Section express some concern with regard to the potential impact of the proposed development upon parking provision and highway safety, it is acknowledged that the site already benefits from planning permission for a comparable scheme, which was allowed at appeal. As the current scheme does not propose any increase in terms of the number of units or bedrooms sought, their observations conclude by raising no objections to the application in highway safety terms. As such, in this regard, the development is considered to be in accordance with the requirements of policy AW5 of the Local Development Plan.

Other Issues:

Ecology

Consultation with the Council's Ecologist has confirmed that given the size of the building and its proximity to the river, it is of a type that may have the potential to support bats. The earlier (2018) application was accompanied by an appropriate ecological survey, which assessed the presence of bats. The current submission is accompanied by an update to this survey. Having assessed the reports, the Council's Ecologist has confirmed that the original emergence survey found no bats using the building. Similarly, the update to the survey reaffirms the findings of the original report. It is noted that the report includes a recommendation that an 'on-call' ecologist arrangement is put in place as a precaution if bats are found during works and that lighting which forms part of the development should be minimised to reduce adverse impacts on commuting and foraging bats. However, these matters could be controlled through the use of suitably worded conditions. As such, with regard to ecological impacts, it is considered that the scheme accords with the requirements of policy AW8 of the Local Development Plan.

Affordable Housing

It is acknowledged that under the provisions of policy SSA12, 20% affordable housing contribution should be sought on schemes which propose 5 or more units of residential accommodation. However Supplementary Planning Guidance: Planning Obligations identifies that a number of exemptions apply for certain types of residential development. One such exemption is the provision of student accommodation. Therefore, as this scheme proposes a purpose built student accommodation block, no affordable housing contribution is applicable in this case.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in Rhondda Cynon Taf from 31 December 2014.

As the development proposes purpose built student accommodation that would be classified as sui generis, the application is for development of a kind that is liable for a charge under the CIL Regulations 2010 as amended. However, the CIL rate for this type of development as set out in the Charging Schedule is £nil and therefore no CIL is payable.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the approval, on appeal, of an earlier scheme at the site has clearly established that the principle of a 25 bed purpose built student accommodation building is acceptable. Furthermore, the Inspector concluded that given the highly sustainable location of the site, the scheme was also considered acceptable in highway safety terms. As such, it is considered that the key issue in the assessment of this application relates to the changes proposed to the scale and appearance of the development. Whilst it is acknowledged that the amendments would result in an increase in the height of the part of the building which addresses Saron Street/ Bridge Street, it is considered that changes to the design, which are associated with this, would not be harmful to either the character or setting of the site and conservation area. Similarly, given the layout and topography of the site, it is not considered that the levels of amenity of neighbouring residents would be affected to a greater degree than the approved scheme.

As such, having regard to both the planning history of the site, the Inspectors decision and the comments of consultees, it is considered that the application accords with the requirements of planning policy and is therefore, recommended for approval, subject to the conditions specified below.

RECOMMENDATION: Grant

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Sections 91 and 93 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plan(s) no(s);
 - Drawing no. A(P)-1 Rev 1 Location Plan
 - Drawing no. A(P)-02 Rev 3 Site Plan
 - Drawing no. A(P)-03 Rev 1 Existing Plans
 - Drawing no. A(P)-04 Rev 1 Existing Elevations
 - Drawing no. A(P)-05 Rev 1 Context
 - Drawing no. A(P)-10 Rev 1 Proposed Ground Floor

- Drawing no. A(P)-11 Rev 1 Proposed First Floor
- Drawing no. A(P)-12 Rev 3 Proposed Second Floor
- Drawing no. A(P)-20 Rev 3 Proposed Elevations N&S
- Drawing no. A(P)-21 Rev 3 Propose Elevations E&W
- Drawing no. A(P)-40 Rev 3 Proposed Views 1
- Drawing no. A(P)-41 Rev 3 Proposed Views 2

and documents received by the Local Planning Authority on 23/08/21, 19/10/21 and 26/10/21 unless otherwise to be approved and superseded by details required by any other condition attached to this consent.

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved plans and documents and to clearly define the scope of the permission.

3. Prior to the construction of the building hereby approved, details and/or samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the proposed development will be in keeping with the character of the area and adjoining buildings in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW6 and AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

4. Construction work shall not begin until a scheme for protecting the future occupiers of the proposed student accommodation block from noise from the adjoining railway line has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority; all works which form part of the scheme shall be completed before any part of the development is occupied.

Reason: To ensure that railway noise is not a source of nuisance to the future occupants of the residential units in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Development Plan.

5. The development shall be carried out in accordance with recommendations and mitigation measures set out within Sections 8 and 9 of the Ecology Report entitled 'Building Inspection In Respect of Bats: The Former Dragon Inn & 1 Saron Street, Treforest, Pontypridd' undertaken by Celtic Ecology and Conservation Ltd, dated April 2018.

Reason: In the interest nature conservation in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW8 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

6. Each unit of the accommodation hereby permitted shall only be occupied by full-time students attending a registered institute of education.

Reason: In order to define and limit the permission and ensure that the development remains solely for use as student accommodation in

accordance with policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

7. A travel plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the occupation of any unit of accommodation within the development. The targets and measures contained in the approved plan shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed timetable unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

8. Demolition or construction works shall not take place outside the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 Mondays to Fridays, 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Public Holidays.

Reason: To protect the amenities of nearby residents in accordance with policy AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

9. Notwithstanding the approved plans and prior to the commencement of development, full engineering design and detail of:

- the proposed footway along the proposed development's common boundary with Saron Street; and
- the removal of the existing cellar doors present on Bridge Street and re-instatement to a typical footway construction;
- shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented on site prior to beneficial use of the development.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

10. No development shall take place, including any works of site clearance, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to provide for:-

- a) the means of access into the site for all construction traffic;
- b) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- c) the management of vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
- d) loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- e) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
- f) wheel cleansing facilities;
- g) the sheeting of lorries leaving the site; and
- h) hours for deliveries to the site.

The approved Construction Method Statement shall be adhered to throughout the development process unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.